

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LATER LIFE

“I was in an emotionally abusive marriage for 35 years until the day I left (six years ago), when, as I read somewhere in these blogs, ‘the fear of staying became greater than the fear of leaving.’ With my children’s unconditional support I have made a life for myself and participate in an older women’s domestic violence support group here in Minnesota.” Allie

Elder victims of domestic violence are the least likely to seek out or accept assistance. The dynamics of abusive relationships between adult children and their parents or between older adult spouses are painful to experience and talk about, yet they exist. Elders are often socially isolated and vulnerable. Many believe that family problems are a private matter and worry that reporting the abuse will result in terrible consequences such as putting them in a nursing home. Some are not aware of laws that protect seniors. This article will provide some information about what constitutes domestic violence and list resources for elders who may be victims.

In Massachusetts there are **two laws** which protect seniors from domestic violence: domestic relations (MGL 209A) and elder abuse (MGL 19A) laws provide for intervention to stop the violence and protect elders. The **domestic relations abuse prevention law** pertains to abuse between former or present “family or household members” or a “dating partner”. To obtain a restraining order under this law you should contact the Newton Police 617-796-2100 or REACH (formerly the Support Committee for Battered Women) at 1-800-899-4000.

The **elder abuse law** pertains to anyone 60 years or older. The Elder Abuse Hotline is used to report physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of someone over the age of 60 at the hands of relatives or a caretaker. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Elder Abuse Hotline can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling 1-800-922-2275 **or** you can make reports directly to the Elder Protective Services unit at Springwell (formerly W. Suburban Elder Services) at (617) 926-4100.

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